

NO. 210.

THE
HISTORY
OF
JONATHAN BROWN,
THE BARGEMAN.

BY THE LATE REV. DR. CALAMY, OF LONDON.



PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

AND SOLD AT THEIR DEPOSITORY, NO. 144 NASSAU-STREET, NEAR
THE CITY-HALL, NEW-YORK; AND BY AGENTS OF THE
SOCIETY, ITS BRANCHES, AND AUXILIARIES, IN
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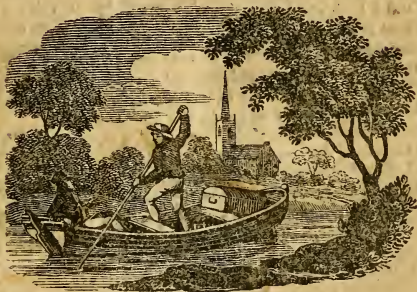
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DR. CALAMY, in his "Historical Account of his own Life and Times," a manuscript, has the following narrative :

It was my usual custom, from the time of my settlement in the congregation at Westminster, on the Lord's day before every administration of the sacrament, to give notice of my intention to administer that ordinance, and also to invite such as were desirous to discourse with me about coming to that ordinance, to be with me at my own house, on the Thursday evening before. Having at a certain time done so, (the year I cannot remember,) when I came home on that Thursday on which I expected company in the evening, I found several waiting for me. Among the rest, there was a little old man, who, upon my entering the room, cried out with an audible voice, "Sir, here's *Jonathan Brown*, that can neither write nor read, that, ac-

according to your invitation on Sunday last, is come to see you and hear what you have to say to him." I looked about, and knew none of the others any more than I did him; and, perceiving he was much the oldest person in the company, told him, that I no more invited him than others; but that, now he was come, if I could be of any use to him, I should rejoice in it. "Nay, but, Master," said he, "how can you say you did not invite *me*? for when you spoke, you looked me full in the face, which, to me, seemed all one as if you had said, Jonathan Brown, do *you* come." I told him, that I did not know there was any such person in being as Jonathan Brown, till now; nor did I look at him, or invite him, any more than others; but that if I could do him any service in the best respects, it would be a real pleasure to me, and I should be thankful to God and his providence for giving me the opportunity. He told me he was in hopes I both could and would do him the greatest service in the world, by directing and assisting him to steer right, in his way to heaven, which was the thing he most earnestly desired.

"I, Sir," said he, "am well known, and there are few, if any, that do know me, but will tell you, Jonathan Brown is as honest a man as any in the parish. But I find this won't do; I want something further, and I beg your advice upon it: and that you may the better know how to suit your advice to my case, I have such a story to tell you of myself, as I dare say you never heard since you were born. But then, Sir," said he, "I must make this bargain with you, that you don't interrupt me, but let me go on my own way, till I come to the end; for if you put me out, I shan't know how to go on where I left off, but must begin again."

I could not but take notice of the honest simplicity of the poor man, and the earnestness of his spirit, and observed several signs of great concern. I therefore determined to let him take his own way, and to endeavour to make such remarks on what he said, as might be a foundation whereon to bottom some advice, that, with the blessing of God, might do him good. I then separated him from the rest of the company, took him into another room, and told him he might tell me his whole story, and I would not interrupt him; after which, I said, I would ask him a

few questions, and then give him the best advice I was able. In this he acquiesced.

He then told me, that he had no notion of either his father or mother, but was put out to nurse by he knew not whom, while he was very young; that his nurse was kind to him, and put him, when he was about six or seven years of age, to a barge-master, and so he was bred up in one of the barges that plied between Ware and London. That while he was a child, he was employed in such little services as he was capable of; and as he grew up, approving himself diligent and faithful, he was commended and trusted, and wanted neither for meat, drink, or clothes; and with his barge-master he continued till he was twenty-five years of age. He told me that, from his childhood, he was just to every body, and wronged no one. He hated lying, and spoke what was true, according to the best of his knowledge; and found something within him often telling him, that such ill things as he heard and saw from day to day were to be avoided. His master was kind to him, and much favoured him, though his fellow-servants and others seemed to bear an ill will to him, because he would not speak and act as they did. But, after all, he was uneasy, and thought he wanted something farther; though, through the ignorance in which he had been trained up, he could not tell what that should be. He added, that in all this time he had not any notion of worship due to the great God, nor had he ever been present at, or so much as heard of any thing of the kind; nor ever so much as heard who or what Christ was, or observed the name of God mentioned by any that were about him, but in their oaths and curses: he had no knowledge of any difference between one day and another, or indeed between good and evil of any sort, but what he had from some inward stirrings in his own breast, which he could not account for. And upon mentioning this, I observed the tears running down his cheeks. He said, that upon the whole he grew so uneasy, that he could not be satisfied to continue with his master any longer, but resolved to go away and shift for himself in the wide world; and whom should he go to but to his old nurse, who was yet living.

His nurse blamed him for leaving his master, when he had no friend to betake himself to for support, and would

have persuaded him to return; but he told her he could not live such a life any longer; and whatever became of him, he was fully resolved no more to return to it. And the great question then was, what he must do for a subsistence, as to which it was requisite he should be thoughtful, seeing the little money he had of his own would soon be gone. She at length advised him to go to London, and apply to a cousin he had, that was a pipe-maker, who lived, I think, in Wapping: this was the course upon which he determined.

Applying to this cousin, and telling him his case, he received him kindly, and told him he would assist him as far as he was able. And, one Lord's day morning, whilst he was there, he told me he was walking about the streets to make his remarks, without knowing where to go, or having any thing to do; and he had wandered as far as Temple Bar, and walking without the gate he observed a number of people go in at a certain place; and then he followed, reckoning they were going to see some sight. When he came in, he said, he saw a great many people in seats, and one in black, mounted high above all the rest, at which he was surprised. He heard the man in black talking with great earnestness to the people present, and telling them that they had souls as well as bodies, and that there was another life after this; and that all such as did not take care to serve and please God, while they were in this life, would be miserable in the other life, and that for ever. He added, that he told them also of one Jesus Christ, of whom he had never heard any thing distinctly before, who was so exceedingly kind as to come from heaven to earth, to show us the way from earth to heaven; and that it was only by his means, that any could get the favour of God, so as to be happy in that other life. And the poor man added, that he was so affected with these things, that, before he stirred, he took up a fixed resolution; that, for the time to come, he would never live any where but where he might hear of this Jesus Christ; that so he might become acquainted with him, in order to his being made happy, and having his soul saved by his means. Going home, he told me, he gave his cousin an account, with a great deal of joy, of what he had heard of Jesus Christ, and the resolution he had taken up; and that he found his cousin had been ac-

quainted with him long before, and that what he mentioned was no news at all to him. He therefore blamed his cousin, that he had never said any thing to him of Jesus Christ; but he told him the only reason was, that he thought he had heard about him before, as well as himself; and that, now, if he chose, he might hear of him every Sabbath; at which he was exceedingly pleased.

At length the barge-master, who was concerned at the loss of his servant, after making great inquiry after him, found him with his cousin, the pipe-maker, and asked him what made him go away from him. Jonathan told him, that he had reason enough for it, as he would soon let him know. "But, Master," said Jonathan, "can you charge me with doing you any wrong?" "No," said the master, "thou never wrongedst me, Jonathan, as ever I knew, of a farthing, but hast been the most honest and faithful servant that I ever had." "I am glad to hear that," said Jonathan, "though you must have greatly injured me to have said I wronged you; for I am sure I brought away nothing but what was my own." "Well, Jonathan," said the master, "thou must come and live with me again, for I cannot do without thee." "Have a care of that, Master," said Jonathan; "I can assure you I shall not easily be brought to that." "Why, Jonathan," said the master, "if thou wantest more wages, I'll freely give thee more; I'll give thee what shall satisfy and content thee." "No, Master," said Jonathan, "no wages will tempt me." "Well, Jonathan," said the master, "what dost thou think my barge may be worth?" "I can't well tell, Master," said Jonathan, "I don't know but, take her hulk and tackle altogether, she may be worth four score pounds." "Well," said the master, "if thou'lt come and live with me, and be as faithful a servant to me as before, a quarter part of her shall be thine own." "No, Master," said Jonathan, "no offer you can make me will tempt me to be any more your servant." The master was very desirous to know the reason. Upon which Jonathan told him, that, though he could not say he wanted for any thing necessary as to his body, while he was in his service, yet that his soul, which was his better part, had been wholly neglected: he had been bred up like a mere brute, without knowing any thing of the worship of God, or hearing any thing

of Jesus Christ, by whom alone, he now understood, he could be saved and made happy. And that he had taken up a fixed resolution to live no where, for the time to come, but where he might have an opportunity of getting acquainted with Jesus Christ, whom he declared he esteemed and valued as his best friend. The master endeavoured to divert Jonathan from such thoughts as these, which he did not at all relish; but could not move him; and finding him fully resolved, and being unable to oblige him to comply with his own choice, left him at length to take his own way.

When this shock was over, Jonathan, being sensible it was not fit he should live upon his cousin, without doing something to get his bread, offered himself to him to serve him as an apprentice seven years, in order to the learning of his trade, and he accepted of him in the capacity of a servant, and he served him faithfully; and, according to his resolution, attended divine worship every Lord's day, in order to his hearing more of Jesus Christ. But, when his time was expired, not liking that business, he turned his thoughts to the water, upon which he had been bred up, and first laboured in lighters and barges as a servant to others, living thriftily, and saving all he could; and Providence favouring him, he at length got, first a smaller vessel, and then a larger one, of his own, till he came and settled at Westminster, where he had an established reputation as an honest man, and was worth money. From the time of his settling there, he told me he was a constant hearer of my predecessor, Mr. Allsop, as he was also of me upon my succeeding him; though I had never heard any thing of him till the time of his coming to me upon the occasion forementioned.

When he thus came to me he was turned of three score; and I began with asking him, if he knew that he was a sinner. He answered, that he did; but that he hoped a merciful God would forgive him all that was amiss. But proceeding to enter upon particulars, about man's fall from God, his recovery by grace, the terms of forgiveness, and the nature of regeneration and sanctification, I found he was very defective in knowledge. He told me he was not book-learned, and could neither read nor write, which he much lamented; but hoped God would make him a mer-

ciful allowance, in consideration of his unhappy education. I asked him, how it came about, that, when he, for so many years before, had been so pleased with hearing of Jesus Christ, he should have taken no more pains to get a distinct knowledge of him in all this time. He told me, that he had attended upon God on Lord's day duly, in public worship, and called upon him in private as he was able; and endeavoured to learn to read, on purpose that he might be able to consult his Bible, and distinctly learn the way to heaven; but he found himself incapable. He added, that he had been forced to take abundance of pains to pick up a livelihood, and God had therein wonderfully succeeded and blessed him, and that he was ashamed he had not made better returns; but that this he could say, that he most earnestly desired to be the Lord's, and there was nothing that he valued like his favour. When I asked him why he did not apply to some Minister in private for direction and advice, he told me he never had an opportunity of acquaintance with any Minister, though he had heard a great many preach and pray, which he hoped he was the better for; and added, that he was afraid of conversing with Ministers alone, for fear they should despise him when they observed his ignorance, and discourage him instead of giving him assistance.

Asking him further, whether he never thought it his duty to remember Christ and his dying love at his table, which was a charge he had given all his followers that hoped to reach heaven and happiness by his means? He told me he had often been thinking of it, and more than ever upon his hearing me discourse in the pulpit upon that duty, but that he knew not how to imagine, that such a poor, ignorant, despicable creature as he was, could ever be worthy of such an honour. When I blamed him, that, though he had been a hearer of my predecessor, Mr. Allsop, for a great many years, he yet never would venture to go and talk with him alone; and asked him how it came about that he should, after all, come to me with so much frankness; he told me that he had been often thinking of visiting Mr. Allsop, but that fear kept him back, and he had been discouraged by the sternness of his look; and that as for me also, he sometimes thought that I overlooked him, when he was disposed to take notice of me with plea-

sure and great respect. But he said, that, on the Lord's day before he came to me, when I invited persons to my house from the pulpit, he thought I looked very pleasantly upon him, as if I was desirous he should come; and that thereupon he took up a resolution that nothing should prevent his coming. Asking him what he now desired of me, and expected from me; he told me, that what he desired and expected was, that, like a faithful Minister of Christ, I should direct him how to bottom his hopes rightly for heaven, that he might go upon such grounds as not to be in danger of miscarrying. Asking him further, whether he would be willing to take pains to get what knowledge was necessary, and was disposed to receive and listen to instruction, he burst into tears, and told me he was ready and willing with all his soul, and should be extremely thankful both to God and me; which put me in mind of the man in the Gospel, that cried to our Saviour, "*Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*" Mark, ix. 24.

I could not help being much affected with this poor man's case, and told him, that I was very willing to take pains with him, to help him by degrees to such knowledge as was necessary, without which the heart could not be good, nor his state safe. He told me, I should find him a very dull scholar, and that he knew not how to express himself, nor indeed to take things in, like others who had better capacities; but he would pray God to help him, and earnestly desired me to pray for him. I gave him a short explication of the principles of religion, and put him upon getting one to read it over to him again and again; and told him that if he would come to me at such times as I mentioned to him, I would discourse things over particularly with him. That, as for expressing himself to me about the things of religion, he might take his own plain way, without cramping himself with words and phrases; and that, in my discoursing with him, I would endeavour to turn things several ways, so that he might take them in one way, if he did not in another. He went away much pleased, and very thankful, saying again and again, he hoped God would reward me.

As I had opportunity afterward, I inquired this poor man's character of some that lived in his neighbourhood, and of others that he dealt with in the way of business;

and all gave him the character of a sincere, honest man, who was ready to help any one he knew wanted help, as far as he was able, and that would not wrong a worm; which was the very expression that I remember many made use of concerning him. He afterward visited me frequently, and I discoursed with him very freely about the main principles of religion, endeavouring to help him to right notions of the happiness of man while innocent, the sinfulness and misery of the state into which he fell, the great work of redemption, the nature of the Gospel covenant, the evil of sin, the excellency of holiness, the duties and blessings of vital Christianity, the evidence with which supernatural revelation is attended, and the purifying nature of Christian hopes. And afterward, I endeavoured to give him an insight into the nature of the two ordinances, that I might help him to improve his baptism, and assist him in preparing for the Lord's Supper. This was a work of time and pains, for Jonathan used intense application, and appeared very warmly concerned to get what knowledge was necessary upon those heads on which I discoursed with him; but he found it attended with abundance of difficulty. However, at length, he arrived to such a degree of knowledge, and what he did attain to was attended with such marks and evidences of sincerity, that I durst not deny admitting him to the Lord's table; notwithstanding, I found he could as well carry a mountain upon his shoulders, as learn to read at his age.

He was afterwards exceedingly pleased and satisfied, and often declared he knew not how to express his thankfulness to God, in the first place, for his great mercy to him; and to me, in the next place, for the pains I had taken with him. His heart seemed to be wholly set upon doing good. In one of his visits to me, he brought a bag of money with him, and told me he was very sensible he had but a little time before him to do good in; and desired me to take what I thought good out of the bag, and distribute to such objects of charity as I was acquainted with, the relieving of whom might be for the glory of God; and he signified to me, that I could not in any way give him a truer satisfaction and pleasure, than by directing him to any thing by which he might glorify that God, to whom he was infinitely indebted. His discourse in the whole of

his conversations was very serious, and all his behaviour exemplary. No one attended divine worship with more constancy, or a greater appearance of seriousness; and the Lord's day was no sooner over, than he longed for the next. The whole of his behaviour was indeed exemplary; and it continued so for the remainder of his life.

Missing him one Lord's day, my heart misgave me, that he was not well, and I determined the next day to make inquiry after him; but I was prevented by a message sent me early the next morning, that Jonathan Brown was very ill, and that if I desired to see him alive, it was requisite I should be with him some time that day. I went in the morning, and found him in a very bad condition; and though he had good advice, yet nothing afforded him any relief. There was a mixed company in the room, talking and chatting with great freedom. Stepping to the bed side, I said, Honest Jonathan, how is it with thee? "Ah, Sir," said he, "Jonathan is a going." Going! said I, whither art thou going? "To my God, Sir," said he, "I hope." I hope so too, said I: but then I added, I pray thee, let me know, in a narrow compass, and that in thine own way, the ground of this thy hope. "Why, Sir," said he, "you know, as I have often told you, that I can neither read nor write: I wish I could. But I have heard from several Ministers, whose faithfulness I have no reason to call in question, and from you in particular, who I am satisfied would not impose upon me, that, if I gave myself heartily to the Lord Jesus Christ, God would be merciful even to such a poor, miserable sinner, as I am, and own me for his, and that this was the sum of the whole Gospel. Now, Sir," said he, "if ever I did any thing heartily all the days of my life, I gave myself, my whole self, to Christ, and therefore I hope that God, for his sake, will be gracious to me, pardon my sins, and take me to himself in heaven, whenever he calls me hence." I endeavoured to strengthen, comfort, and encourage him; and afterwards recommended him to God in prayer; and he died that evening, not only peaceably, but triumphantly. To God be the praise!

I have told the substance of this little history at different times to several persons, who have been not a little pleased with it, and made it their request to me to leave some ac-

count of it behind me, that it might not be lost, but remain for the edification of others. This request I have promised to comply with; and that promise I now discharge; solemnly assuring any whom it may concern, that I have not in this account at all exaggerated, but that the whole of it is strictly true.

REFLECTIONS.

1. It appears that Jonathan Brown was entirely without education, and that his ignorance kept him from rendering any worship to God, either in public or in private. Lamentable, however, as his condition was, "God had not left himself without witness" in his conscience; but "the stirrings in his own breast, which he could not account for," had induced an uneasiness in his mind, and an impression "that he wanted something farther, though he could not tell what that should be."

2. This faint light and these feeble convictions undoubtedly came "*from above*," and were the commencement of that "*good work*" which God was producing in the heart of this poor man. Has then the reader of this Tract had light to see his ignorance and the darkness which surrounds him? Has he had convictions of his depravity and guilt, and felt uneasiness on account of the danger to which they expose him? Let him cherish these impressions, and act upon them in every way that the providence and word of God point out for his comfort and relief; and trusting in Christ, he shall never be forsaken.

3. The effect of the preaching of the Gospel on the soul of Jonathan Brown, is well worthy of observation. When he first heard of Jesus Christ, and of his coming from heaven to earth to save sinners, "he was so affected, that, before he stirred from the place, he resolved that, for the time to come, he would never live any where but where he might hear of Jesus Christ." How happy was this poor man! his darkness was dispelled, the "*true light*" now shone upon him, and his uneasiness and uncertainty were alleviated or removed, by hearing and accepting the faithful saying, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." 1 Tim. i. 15. Surely "there is salvation in no other, nor any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts, iv.

12. Reader, whether thou art rich or poor, learned or unlearned, thou art by nature a depraved, and by practice a sinful and guilty creature. In the language of Scripture, "thou hast destroyed thyself; but Jesus is the hope set before thee in the Gospel. In him alone thy help is found; therefore "Believe in him, and *thou* shalt be saved." Acts, xvi. 31.

4. The evidence which Jonathan Brown gave of the reality of his conversion to God, in his life and conduct, is very pleasing and satisfactory. "His conversation was serious; his behaviour exemplary; his attendance on the public worship of God constant; and a part of his little bag of money was devoted to the poor, in order that God might be glorified thereby." Reader, there is but one "common salvation" for every class of mankind, and every description of persons in each class. All "believers are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" (1 Cor. vi. 11.) their souls are "purified in obeying the truth, through the Spirit;" (1 Pet. i. 22.) and they produce "the fruit of the Spirit, which is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." Eph. v. 9. Try yourself, therefore, by these marks and evidences of real, scriptural Christianity; and remember, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" (Rom. vii. 9.) and that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14.

Finally, the account of Jonathan's death is very interesting and affecting. "If," said he with his dying breath, "if I ever did any thing heartily all the days of my life, I gave myself, my whole self, to Christ"—and he departed, not only "peacefully, but triumphantly." Godly simplicity marked the language and the conduct of this poor, but good man; and that gracious Redeemer in whom he believed, and to whom he had given himself, his whole self, owned, supported, and comforted his expiring servant, and without doubt took him to the happiness and glory of the heavenly state. May every poor and uninstructed man be encouraged by this narrative to attend the preaching of the Gospel, the substance of which is "Christ crucified, for the redemption and salvation of sinners." "To know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is life eternal." John, xvii. 3. It is a blessed, holy, and saving knowledge; and, as in the case of Jonathan Brown, it makes the poor "rich in faith, and heirs of the promises."



Bartimeus.

" Mercy, O thou Son of David !"
Thus blind Bartimeus pray'd ;
" Others by thy word are saved,
Now to me afford thine aid."

Many for his crying chid him,
But he call'd the louder still ;
Till the gracious Saviour bid him
" Come, and ask me what you will."

Money was not what he wanted,
Though by begging us'd to live,
But he ask'd, and Jesus granted,
Alms which none but he could give :

" Lord, remove this grievous blindness,
" Let my eyes behold the day ;"
Straight he saw, and, won by kindness,
Follow'd Jesus in the way.

Oh ! methinks I hear him praising,
Publishing to all around,
" Friends, is not my case amazing ?
" What a Saviour I have found !

" Oh ! that all the blind but knew him,
" And would be advis'd by me !
" Surely would they hasten to him,
" He would cause them all to see."

RIPPON'S COL.

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